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The far right in the EU

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AUSTRIA

Population 7.9 million.

Austria is a federal state. Its constitution guarantees equality of all Austrian citizens. Organisations with Nazi aims are banned but there are still no laws specifically combating racial discrimination.

Assessment

Harsh legislation on migration and asylum continues to be stringently enforced. Much racist hostility exists towards the Roma minority. Nazis carried out letter-bomb campaigns in the 1990s but the biggest racist threat is the Freedom Party (FPÖ) led by Herbert Haupt (real leader Jörg Haider) which won more than 652,000 votes (23.2%) in the European parliamentary elections in June 1999.

In the Austrian general election on 3 October 1999, the FPÖ improved on this to win 1,191,000 votes (27.3%), confirming its position as the second biggest party in Vienna



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and establishing itself as second in the country. The FPÖ demands compulsory repatriation of foreigners and "Austria first". It became the junior partner in a coalition with the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) on 5 February 2000.

In the elections of 2002, the FPÖ vote collapsed to 10.2% but it was still invited to take part in a new right-wing coalition with the ÖVP in February 2003. It holds four ministries. The FPÖ sits in eight of Austria's nine regional parliaments and is in overall control of one, Carinthia, where Haider is regional governor.

The hardcore nazi scene is militant but has no political significance. All the serious fascists are in the FPÖ.

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BELGIUM

Population 10.1 million.

Belgium has devolved government. Equality before the law is constitutionally guaranteed for all Belgians and rights of minorities are guaranteed.

Assessment

Belgium maintains a policy of no immigration and restrictive rights to asylum. This situation mirrors France. Some mainstream politicians have described migrants as "an invasion".

The extreme-right Vlaams Blok (VB) - a direct descendent of pre-war fascist formations - is strong in the northern, Flemish-speaking Flanders region, where it commands the support of 17.9% of the electorate and 30% in Antwerp.

Nationally, the VB took 11.6% in the May 2003 general election and has 18 seats in the Belgian federal parliament.

The VB demands forced expulsion of foreigners and an amnesty for Belgian SS men and wartime Nazi collaborators. It won 675,000 votes (9.2%) in the elections to the European Parliament in June 1999.

The Front National, which is active in Belgium's French-speaking south, also won two seats in the May 2003 elections, with 1.92% of the vote nationally.

The militant nazi right is of almost zero political significance in Belgium.

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DENMARK

Population 5.2 million.

Denmark has no constitutional provisions against racial discrimination.

Assessment

The nazi movement remains very weak but internationally well connected through the skinhead music scene. Swastika flags can be openly displayed. Respectable racist parties, however, have much better prospects than outright nazis.

In the June 1999 European parliamentary election, the virulently anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, populist Dansk Folkeparti (DF), led by Pia Kjaersgaard, won 114,000 votes (5.8%), which gave it one seat in Strasbourg.

This success was consolidated with a vote of 12% in the elections of 2001 which came in the wake of the 11 September terrorist atrocities. The DF now has 22 parliamentary seats and is Denmark's third largest party.

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FINLAND

Population 5 million.

Finland has constitutional guarantees of equality before the law for all Finnish citizens.

Assessment

Finland has a state policy of zero immigration and only reluctantly accepts asylum seekers (a maximum of 500 a year). Racism at street and community level is not seen as a serious problem but nazi skinheads are violent towards non-Europeans and have close connections with Swedish nazi skins.

A right-wing populist party, True Finns (TF), has emerged to win three seats in the 200-member Finnish parliament. This represents only 1.7% of the national vote. TF, led by Timo Soini, was formed in 1995 and is unashamedly populist and far-right in its orientation, advocating putting "True Finns first". In populist style, it is also a law and order party.

TF has escaped much international attention because it does not advocate overtly anti-immigrant policies. There are, however, openly racist elements in the party, especially the former wrestler Tony Halme, who is very famous in Finland and personally received 40% of the party's entire vote in the 2003 general election. Halme has made racist remarks in the Finnish media.

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FRANCE

Population 57.9 million.

The constitution guarantees equality before the law. There is provision for laws and regulations to apply only to foreigners. However no legal recognition of minority groups exists.

Assessment

France has very tight laws on migration, asylum and citizenship. Open discrimination in the social sphere - jobs, housing, education etc - against black French citizens exists despite the body of law. Police racism is also prevalent, despite the establishment of anti-racist units in 70 regions.

Organised racism is very strong. 11.1% of the electorate voted for the 25,000-strong Front National (FN) in the June 2002 general election. There is considerable random racist and antisemitic violence but the authorities do not properly monitor its extent.

The threat of a mass fascist party receded when the FN split in December 1998. However, the French presidential election results in April 2002 graphically illustrated the continuing potential for such a party, when the FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen took 17.9% of the vote - over 4 million votes - and was runner-up to Jacques Chirac.

Internationally, Le Pen has established a loose structure called "Euronat" but its main purpose would appear to be to raise Le Pen's personal international profile rather than to coordinate cross-border activity.

The Mouvement National Républicain (MNR), steered by Bruno Mégret, who led the 1998 walkout from the FN, is now seen as politically irrelevant after its vote plummeted to 2.3% in last year's presidential elections. The party is wracked by an insurmountable financial crisis and has lost its electoral stronghold in Vitrolles.

The extra-parliamentary fascist scene briefly made world headlines in 2002 when Maxime Brunerie, a member of the now-banned national-revolutionary group Unité Radicale (UR), tried to kill President Chirac. UR has now been replaced by Bloc Identitaire, which has about 200 members.

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GERMANY

Population 81.5 million.

Germany is a federal state with legislative power divided between the state and 17 regions. Each region has its own constitution.

Article 3 of the federal constitution guarantees equality before law regardless of race, sex, parentage, language, homeland, origin, faith, religion and political opinions. There is no special legislation against discrimination.

Article 21 declares unconstitutional any parties that seek to abolish the democratic order.

Criminal law penalises:

- Unconstitutional organisations from displaying symbols and spreading propaganda.
- Incitement to violence and hatred against 'segments' of the population.
- Disturbing the peace of the dead.
- Holocaust denial.
- Insults with violence.
- Defaming the memory of the dead.
- Distribution of publications morally harmful to youth.

Assessment

Officially Germany is not a "country of immigration". Its citizenship law (1913) is based on blood line and German ancestry. Foreigners have "guest" status. The hitherto liberal right to asylum was drastically modified in 1993 after a racist terror wave. Everyday discrimination and anti-foreigner violence are rife. In 2001, nazi crimes leapt by over 50% compared with 2000 but fell a little in 2002.

Organised racism is strong but nazi groups have been somewhat weakened by state bans. There are about 45,500 active fascists in five main groupings: the German People's Union (DVU) with 15,000 members, the Republicans (REP) with 10,500, the National Democratic Party (NPD) with 6,500, the independent Kameradschaften which number approximately 2,800 and the nazi skinhead scene of 10,700.

In early 2001, the federal government applied to the Constitutional Court for the NPD, which is linked to the BNP, to be outlawed but the application was eventually rejected at the beginning of 2003.

The REP won 437,000 votes (9%) in the Baden-Württemberg regional election in March 1996. The DVU won 192,000 votes (13.6%) in the Saxony-Anhalt regional elections of April 1998. In the general election of September 2002 the far right performed disastrously, averaging 1.2% nationally. DVU fascists, however, still sit in federal state

parliaments in Bremen and Brandenburg.

The hardcore nazi scene of Kameradschaften and skinheads is significant mainly for its violence. Nazis have murdered almost 150 people since October 1990. The militant nazis are well organised, stage at least one demonstration every week and have access to weapons. The nazi skinhead music scene is by far the biggest in Europe and hardcore nazis place heavy emphasis on developing internet sites, of which more than 1,000 exist at present.

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GREECE

Population 10.6 million.

Assessment

The foreign population is largely integrated into Greek society but tension exists between Greeks and Muslims, a result of conflict with Turkey and a spin-off from the war in Kosovo. There have also been reports of discrimination against Roma.

The extreme right generally makes little mark but the nationalist Hellenic Front (HF) won 1.5% of the vote in the October 2002 municipal and prefecture elections, the highest vote for a nationalist party for 20 years. The HF, which advocates an aggressive foreign policy towards Turkey and Macedonia, also campaigns on anti-immigration themes. Albanian immigrants are especially targeted as a "source of criminality".

The Front Line party, which was formed in 1999 and stood in the 2000 elections, is led by Holocaust denier Kostas Plevris. The openly nazi Golden Dawn group has existed for several years and has been involved in antisemitism and violent attacks on left-wing targets. Neo-nazis attached to the international Blood and Honour nazi music network produce a weekly newspaper and have international links, hosting conferences of European and US nazis.

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ITALY

Population 57.9 million.

The constitution guarantees equality before the law and generally bans all forms of discrimination. Resurrection of "The Fascist Party" is banned.

Assessment

Migration laws were drastically tightened in November 1995 to bring Italy into line with the EU. Racism and xenophobia have grown markedly. Foreigners, especially Roma and North Africans, are now seen as a problem.

The right-wing National Alliance (AN) is strong. Formerly the Italian Social Movement (MSI), heir to Mussolini's party, it changed its name in 1994 and declared itself post-fascist. It took 12% of the vote in the 2001 general election and became part of Silvio Berlusconi's coalition government, where it remains. Its leader, Gianfranco Fini became deputy Prime Minister. The AN had been part of Berlusconi's first coalition government from March to December 1994 and won 14.1% in regional elections in April 1995.

Fascist candidates received 16.9% of the vote in the June 1999 European elections. Other fascist groups include the revived MSI, the violent Forza Nuova (FN) and the Hammerskins. The leader of the FN is the convicted terrorist Roberto Fiore and it leads the fascist International Third Position. The FN has massively increased its influence among football hooligans and in the skinhead scene. It has also contested elections and won some local representation. Fascist terrorism is a constant danger, exemplified by the bombing of the Il Manifesto newspaper by an FN associate in spring 2001.

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THE NETHERLANDS

Population 15.4 million.

Article 1 of the Dutch constitution lays down principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Assessment

Traditional liberalism in migration and asylum matters has been eroded by "Fortress Europe" measures. Government policies aimed at greater integration are a partial success but racism has grown. Rotterdam had self-confessed nazi councillors but the far right was wiped out completely in municipal and general elections in 1998 and the 1999 European elections. Racist violence remains comparatively low. Most complaints to the Ombudsman are about the police.

Though the "official" far right was eliminated from the electoral landscape, The Netherlands experienced a political earthquake in 2001-02 with the rapid rise of the anti-refugee, anti-Islamic movement around Pim Fortuyn. After Fortuyn's assassination, the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) entered parliament at its first attempt and became part of a coalition government. However, the LPF has not been able to maintain its progress and lost all but eight of its 26 seats in the general election of January 2003.

The more militant fascists are fragmented among a handful of organisations, some of them closely linked with nazis in Germany.

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PORTUGAL

Population 10.6 million.

The constitution provides the same rights, other than political ones, for foreigners and stateless people as for Portuguese citizens. It also protects workers from racial discrimination, provides for equality in access to education, and outlaws fascist organisations.

Assessment

There are constitutional provisions against discrimination but Portugal has been increasingly forced to meet EU demands on migration and asylum. Fascist groups are politically unimportant but active in main cities. Police attitudes and brutality, however, are a bigger problem for black people than fascists. Also, a law exists on "nomadism" which could be used against Roma.

Like elsewhere in Europe, electoral forces have emerged that court popularity with anti-immigrant politics.

For example, the Popular Party (PP), led by Paulo Portas, won 8.75% of the vote in the general election of March 2002. It now has 14 seats in the 230-seat parliament and is a junior party in the Portuguese coalition government.

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SPAIN

Population 39.2 million.

Spain has constitutional equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on racial grounds. The "right to human dignity" is legally upheld.

Assessment

There are no laws against racist statements or remarks. Open nazi publications continue to be printed in Spain and exported to Germany and Austria especially. Racist attitudes among the population towards Roma have grown threefold since 1986; racism towards Arabs has doubled and towards black people tripled. Draconian asylum laws have dramatically reduced the number of asylum seekers. There have been pogroms against Moroccan migrant farm workers in the southern region of Andalusia for several years. The fascists in Spain are violent but electorally lame, polling less than 1%, and not strong enough to field candidates in the June 1999 European elections. Police

repression against black people is far more prevalent.

The would-be anti-immigrant populist Independent Liberal Group is led by Julian Munoz Palomo. A new fascist party, Frente Español (FE), was launched in January 2003. Led by the Francoist veteran Blas Piñar, the FE invited a variety of European fascists to its founding conference. They included the German NPD, the Front National from France, Italian terrorist Roberto Fiore's Forza Nuova and representatives of the Sweden Democrats.

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SWEDEN

Population 8.8 million.

The Swedish constitution forbids discrimination, restricts freedom of association for racist groups and prohibits incitement of racial hatred in the media. The state is empowered to promote cultural development of minorities.

Assessment

Historically humanitarian (although it collaborated extensively with the Nazis during the war and operated compulsory sterilisation policies until the 1980s), tolerant and liberal, Sweden's migration and asylum regulations are, in fact, now more stringent than ever.

Nazis of the Storm network, VAM and National Socialist Front (NSF) are notorious for murder, violence and armed terror actions. In May 1999, NSF nazis executed two policemen during an armed bank raid, then in June car-bombed anti-fascists in Stockholm and police officers in Malmö. The following October, fascists linked to a group called National Youth murdered the trade unionist Björn Söderberg. Nazi-skinhead youth and music culture remains highly visible. The headquarters of the nazi hate music outlets NS88 and Nordland are in Sweden.

In the September 2002 general election, the racist Sweden Democrats (SD) scored 76,000 votes (1.4%) - a leap from their previous tally of 19,600 - and grabbed 50 seats on local councils. Their fascist rivals, the National Democrats, also achieved a limited success, polling 4,000 votes in the ballot for the national parliament and 7,000 local council votes across Sweden.

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